



1224 Mill St Bldg B, Suite 223, East  
Berlin, CT 0602  
203-238-1207  
FAX (203) 238-3437  
[www.ctnurses.org](http://www.ctnurses.org)

Testimony Public Health Committee  
March 16, 2018

**Testimony: RAISED BILL NO. 5291 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO  
INFORMATION REGARDING THE SAFETY OF SPORTS HELMETS.**

Good Morning: Representative Steinberg, Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers,  
Representative Srinivasan, and esteemed members of the Public Health  
Committee. I want to thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on  
Testimony: **RAISED BILL NO. 5291 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO  
INFORMATION REGARDING THE SAFETY OF SPORTS HELMETS** on behalf of the  
Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA).

I am Mary Jane Williams Ph.D., RN current chairperson of Government Relations  
Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association. I speak in strong support of  
**RAISED BILL NO. 5291 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO INFORMATION  
REGARDING THE SAFETY OF SPORTS HELMETS.**

In order to protect all athletes, young or old, accredited organizations have set  
standards related to helmet safety specific to each sport and or activity to protect  
the athlete participating in a variety of sports. Specific Standards are established

though testing done under a controlled research process. The issue being raised in this proposed legislation is the ability for any manufacturer that sells protective headgear that meets performance standards for athletic equipment, the freedom to provide the report to the Department of Education, that such headgear is certified, meets the standards of the specific activity and should include the severity index unit score for the headgear.

### **What are helmet standards?**

Standards define laboratory tests for helmets that are matched to the use intended. If a helmet can pass the tests for a sport or activity, it provides adequate impact protection. Standards also define other tests for such parameters as strap strength, shell configuration, visor attachments, and the head coverage that must be provided, depending on the activity.

Standards are developed and published by various standards-setting organizations.

A typical standard specifies impact tests, strap tests, characteristics of materials to be used, required coverage, labeling and other requirements. Some have tests to simulate low temperature performance, hot performance, wet performance and sunlight ageing. Test equipment is described as well as the severity of the testing. Standards define laboratory tests for helmets that are matched to the use intended. If a helmet can pass the tests for a sport or activity, it provides adequate impact protection.

## **Why use a helmet?**

Helmets are useful as safety gear to prevent injuries in an uncontrolled environment. If you can't prevent a crash or impact, but you know it will occur, a helmet can prevent or minimize injury to the head and brain. We cannot emphasize enough that the first step in preventing injury is to minimize the probability of crashing or being impacted. Not hitting something hard is infinitely better than hitting with a helmet on! (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) (NOCSAE)

## **Why Publish this Information?**

In an era where we have an increase in contact sports and contact sport injuries it seems that publishing safety information directly related to equipment that may prevent and/or lessen a traumatic impact resulting in a concussion should be considered essential in the prevention of Concussion injuries.

Concussion is one of the most serious risks to young athletes. Whether the athlete plays football, hockey, soccer, baseball, or any number of other sports, education and prevention efforts are crucial in reducing the risk for concussion. Traumatic Brain Injuries, are on the rise in our young athletes. According to the CDC, "Each year, U.S. emergency departments treat an estimated 173,285 sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain Injuries, including concussions, among children and adolescents, from birth to 19 years. During the last decade, ED visits for sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries, including concussions, among children and adolescents increased by 60%. Overall, the

activities associated with the greatest number of TBI-related ED visits included bicycling, football, playground activities, basketball, and soccer.

National surveillance in 9 high school sports: TBI represents almost 9% of all injuries reported in the 9 sports. Numbers and rates are highest in football (55,007; 0.47 per 1000 athlete exposures) and girls' soccer (29,167; 0.36 per 1000 athlete exposures). A national survey of all sports- and recreation-related injuries among all ages demonstrates that 31% occurred in a sports facility and 20% in a school facility." (Runyan, R. 2014).

The issue that is prevalent in our society is that we live in denial of the real issue related to even mild cerebral trauma. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions may occur in any sport or recreation activity; therefore, it is essential we provide all the information necessary to make the best educated decision when choosing a protective helmet for all of our athletes. We can only accomplish this if we have all the research information when making these critical decisions.

I speak in strong support of **RAISED BILL NO. 5291 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THE SAFETY OF SPORTS HELMETS.**

**Thank you**

**Mary Jane M Williams PhD, RN**

**Chair Government Relations, Connecticut Nurses Association**

**Professor Emeritus Central Connecticut State University**